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Diana T Fritz 03/21/2007 11:31:25 AM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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Text:

CONFIDENTIAL

SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

August 20, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 3828 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV
Captions: None
Subject: ZAYED CENTER WEB SITE CLOSED
Ref: None

CONFIDENTIAL ABU DHABI 03828

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: AMB DCM P/M ECON RSO

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:RAALBRIGHT
DRAFTED: POL:JFMAYBURY
CLEARED: PA: TPONCE

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OO RUEHC RUEHEE
DE RUEHAD #3828 2321128
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1361
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

CONFIDENTIAL ABU DHABI 003828

SIPDIS

NSC FOR AMB ELIOT ABRAMS

NEA/FO AND NEA/ARP, CAIRO FOR HEGADORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/19/13
TAGS: PREL PGOV TC
SUBJECT: ZAYED CENTER WEB SITE CLOSED

Refs: A) Abu Dhabi 3817, B) Malenas-Albright 8/20/03 e-mail

C) Abu Dhabi 3801

¶1. (U) Classified by Charge d'Affaires, a.i.,
Richard Albright, for Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

¶2. (C) The Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-up (ZCCF) Web site has been closed, the first tangible, public action by the UAE against the Center. "This Site has been Stopped," reads the message at www.zccf.org.ae, the Center's Web address. However, Center employees say the Center remains open and is receiving letters from Arab journalists and intellectuals expressing support and solidarity against what they perceive to be an "Zionist campaign" against Abu Dhabi-based and funded think tank,

affiliated with the Arab League.

¶13. (C) Earlier this week, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan had reacted with surprise when they learned from Charge that the Web site was still open (see refs A, C). They said they would look into the matter. Apparently, the order to shut down the Web site was carried out some time Tuesday night or Wednesday morning.

¶14. (U) At the ZCCF, meanwhile, a defiant unnamed ZCCF official told the local English language daily "Gulf News" that the Center is "being subjected to an unjustified smear campaign." The local press also has published statements by GCC and Arab League spokesmen supporting the Center's activities. Today's Arabic language "Al Khaleej" described efforts to shut down the Center as a "Zionist campaign." It referred to a letter from Syrian Information Minister Adnan Omran in which he sees the "disinformation campaign" by "Western Zionist elements" as a kind of badge of honor for the Center. The same article cited a letter from Yemeni Foreign Minister Dr. Abubakr Al-Qurbi's condemning the "Zionist attack" against the ZCCF.

¶15. (C) Concerning the two UAEG emissaries who were supposed to go to the U.S. this week to meet with Harvard officials, hoping to persuade the university not to return Sheikh Zayed's endowment (see ref C), the Department has learned from UAE Ambassador Al-Asri that they are meeting university representatives in London on August 21 (see ref B). It is unclear if they will go to the U.S. after this. A Harvard participant in those meetings who called for information on the UAE participants, informed us that Harvard plans to take a public position by the time the semester starts in early September. One option involves a statement that it is continuing to study the matter.

¶16. (C) COMMENT: There seems to be little doubt about who pulled the plug on the Web site. Sheikh Zayed had ordered the Center closed. The Beni Fatima are following through with their father's wishes. Now that the Web site has been disabled, we expect the UAEG to focus on how and when to close the Center altogether. Closing the Web site removes the controversial content at the heart of this conflict, but the decision provides ammunition for the Center's Arab nationalist supporters who are shouting conspiracy. The Emiratis appear determined to pursue their interests in avoiding a public slap from Harvard and seem prepared to take the flak from the Arab world. Because of Arab League involvement, we expect there could be some action at that level.

ALBRIGHT